

THE SECRETS OF
BODY TRANSFORMATION

FOOD & NUTRITION

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LESSON #1

FOOD & NUTRITION

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PALEO, VEGAN, INTERMITTENT FASTING...

**Here's how to choose the
absolute best diet for you.**

By John Berardi, Ph.D.

People always ask which “nutrition camp” I fall into. Is it paleo? Low carb? Intermittent fasting? In essence, they're asking: “What's the best diet?” In today's article I'll share my surprising answer.

What is the best diet?

A while back, I did a short media blitz in Toronto, appearing on three TV networks and speaking with 13 print journalists in a single day.

For a natural introvert like me, it was exhausting. But as the co-founder of a company whose mission is to help men and women improve their eating and lifestyle habits in practical, sustainable ways, I always appreciate an opportunity to help even more people.

While the journalists' questions ranged from health and weight loss to sports nutrition, one particular theme kept emerging. They wanted to know which "nutrition camp" I belong to.

From one award-winning journalist:

"I've visited your website and I'm still not sure: do you guys believe in 'paleo'? Or do you believe in the standard 'RD stuff'?"

From a TV broadcaster (on air, no less):

"Your coaching program sounds great. But, if I were to sign up for it, would I have to cut out all my carbs?"

From a production assistant on a TV program:

"I have a friend who's vegan and she's super healthy. I'm thinking of trying it...what do you think?"

In that one day I received at least a dozen questions like this, all of which essentially ask the same thing:

What's the “best diet” for people to follow?

After answering the same questions over and over again I started to get annoyed. Not at the journalists, mind you. But at *myself*. Because even after years of the same question, I haven't yet come up with a pithy, one-liner response.

I simply don't fall into a single “diet camp”. And that confuses the hell out of people, since the human brain likes easy categorization.

“But ... but ... I need to fit you into one of these nice little nutrition boxes.”

If I could help people stick me and Precision Nutrition into the right nutrition box, I would. Believe me, it'd make things a lot easier.

But I just can't do it.

Here's why: **I don't believe there's a single, absolutely, positively, without-a-doubt best diet for every person to follow, always, and forever.**

Spend enough time actually working with clients — like we do every day — and you'll probably start to feel the same way too.

Think about this: Our coaching program has been tested with over 100,000 clients in 100 different countries. (Plus it's been validated in several peer-reviewed scientific studies).

You can imagine the diversity.

- **Body type:** Some clients come to us tall and thin. Others come short and stocky.

- **Dietary preferences & exclusions:** Some clients come to us eating lots of meat every day. Others come eating no meat at all.
- **Budget:** Some clients come to us with an incredibly low budget. Others come with an unlimited budget.
- **Organic / conventional:** Some clients come to us eating only boxed and packaged foods. Others come eating only natural, organic, whole foods.
- **Nutrition knowledge:** Some clients come to us as devout followers of a certain dietary practice. Others come with very little nutrition knowledge whatsoever.
- **Time:** Some clients come to us with lots of free time for a health and fitness project. Others come with very little time to devote to health and fitness.

You get the picture.

There's simply no way we'd be able to help all those folks make incremental improvements in their eating if we were militant about a single nutrition paradigm.

Can you imagine:

"I know you have a super-low budget for food. But if you sell your vehicle, or maybe one of your children, you'll be able to afford the organic and free-range whole foods we recommend in our program. That's the only way to get healthy and fit."

"Carbs? You're not alone. We all like 'em. But this program is all about

cutting way back. Low carb is what works, period. Insulin is the enemy. So say goodbye to sugar. And pasta. Potatoes too. And rice...”

“Sure, I understand the moral and ethical obligation you feel. But eating animal foods ... that’s how we do it. You need the protein and the fat. And it’s how our ancestors ate. So suck it up, throw a steak on the grill, and let’s get this party started.”

While these responses are a little extreme, they’re not that far from what I hear every day in the gym or read on Facebook. And it’s a shame because...

The best coaches don’t actually have a single nutrition philosophy.

Sure, if a particular nutrition idea — like Paleo or vegetarianism — worked for you personally, that’s awesome. You should be happy you found something that helped you reach your goals.

But to suggest that because it worked for you, at one point in your life, under a particular set of circumstances, now everyone else should follow the same program? Well, it’s not quite that simple.

Physiologically, the human body can do well under a host of different nutritional conditions.

This is clearly demonstrated by examining the traditional diets of various tribes and ethnic groups throughout the world.

- For example, the Arctic Inuit and African Masai eat traditional diets that are very high in fat and animal products with very few vegetables.

- Conversely, the Kitavans in the South Pacific eat traditional diets that are low in fat but very high in vegetables and starchy carbs.
- And the Tokelau near New Zealand eat traditional diets that are very high in saturated fats.

Crazy differences here... yet all traditional diet eaters are relatively healthy people with minimal incidences of cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes, obesity, etc.

This is only possible because the human body is amazingly adaptable to a host of different dietary conditions.

It *is* possible to be healthy and fit whether you eat mostly meat or mostly veggies, mostly fat or mostly carbs, many times a day or just a few times, and so on.

Which means that, as a nutrition coach, I shouldn't really belong to any specific nutrition camp at all.

When you work with actual human beings, you must be a nutritional agnostic.

Open to evaluating anything and everything that could work. Willing to test new methods, even if they fly in the face of current beliefs or practices. And humble enough to sometimes be wrong, even if you really like being right. (Which I do.)

If I believe too strongly in any particular “nutritional religion”, I fixate on the food itself. Or my own personal way of looking at food. And I lose focus on what's most important as a coach: my clients and their individual physiological and psychological needs.

Here's another example: our Precision Nutrition staff. With close to 100

team members, PN is like a nutritional United Nations convention.

- Some eat plant-based diets. Others eat meat-based diets.
- Some eat high carb diets. Others eat low carb diets.
- Some eat dairy-free, gluten-free, and all other potential allergen-free diets. Others “eat whatever I want as long as I get enough proteins and fats and stay healthy” diets.

The common theme is that we all practice what we preach, we all take health and fitness seriously, and we all monitor the results of our dietary choices closely, adjusting where necessary.

We respect each other’s choices and get along just fine. We’re more interested in exploring what *works* than we are in being right.

But wait ... how can all these different diets actually work?

You’re probably wondering: How can such wildly different nutrition programs all lead to positive results?

My response: **They’re not as different as you might think.**

Most effective nutrition programs are more similar than different. (Yes, even Paleo and plant-based eating.)

When done properly, Paleo diets, plant-based diets, high carb diets, low carb diets, eating small meals frequently, eating larger meals infrequently, etc. all accomplish the following:

1. They raise nutrition awareness and attention.

I know, everyone wants to talk about the food itself — the proteins, carbs, and fats. What to eat more of and what to avoid.

But research is now showing that **simply paying better attention to what you eat is a key factor in whether you'll lose fat, get lean, and improve your health.**

Whether your attention is trained on avoiding carbs, eating more vegetables, seeking out organic / free-range food, avoiding animal foods, or avoiding “non Paleo” food, it's all good.

Because **what you focus on may not matter as much as simply caring more about what you're eating in the first place.**

2. They focus on food *quality*.

Paleo and low carb advocates want you to eat more natural, free-range animal-based foods that are higher in protein, higher in fat, and are minimally processed.

Vegan and high carb advocates want you to eat more natural, plant-based foods that are higher in fiber, antioxidants, and are minimally processed.

Recognize what's common here?

Indeed, very few nutrition camps recommend you eat more processed, chemical-laden “junk” food. (Thank goodness.)

Instead, **pretty much every camp recommends eating whole, minimally processed, nutrient-rich foods.** And that may be one of the

most important nutrition interventions of all, regardless of the protein, carb, and fat breakdowns.

3. They help eliminate nutrient deficiencies.

In keeping with the last point, the best nutritional advocates help us shift *away from highly* processed foods, which are often low in nutrients because they've been stripped out during processing, and *toward* more whole, minimally processed foods, which often have their nutrients intact.

Thus, a properly designed diet of any kind eliminates some of the most common nutrient deficiencies (water, certain vitamins and minerals, proteins, and essential fatty acids).

This is huge. We often look, feel, and perform terribly when we're deficient in important nutrients. But within a few weeks of correcting these deficiencies, we feel totally rejuvenated. (And because the transformation is so dramatic, that's often when we become diet zealots.)

4. They help control appetite and food intake.

When we're more aware of what we're eating, choose more satisfying, higher quality foods, and eliminate nutrient deficiencies, we almost always end up eating less total food. We feel more satisfied. We lose fat, gain lean muscle, and perform better.

Notice that you don't need calorie counting here. Focusing on food awareness and food quality is usually enough for people to tune into their own hunger and appetite. And that means calorie control without the annoying calorie math.

It also means you can maintain your results / weight loss. Counting calories has a shelf-life; no one does it forever.

5. They promote regular exercise.

When people start paying attention to their eating, they usually start thinking about physical activity too. In fact, many of the diet camps recommend regular exercise. (Which is a good idea, since focusing on diet alone may actually interfere with establishing a consistent exercise routine.)

When a person exercises regularly, with a mix of high and low intensity activity, they dramatically improve their ability to turn the food they eat – whatever food that is – into functional tissue (instead of extra fat).

You can now understand how different well-designed dietary philosophies – even when they seem oppositional and antagonistic on the surface – can all promote good health, body composition, and longevity.

Which is why ...

Choosing one single diet camp to follow makes no sense.

1. There's no such thing as one, universal "best" diet.

There's no one absolutely, positively, without-a-doubt best diet for everyone. Humans have evolved to do well under all sorts of dietary conditions.

That's why I'm happy to help people find the best one for them, no

matter their dietary preferences.

Of course, this is a big win for my clients: They get in shape doing more of the things they actually like. And a win for me: I get to help more people.

2. Most popular diets actually have a lot in common.

Most popular diets — when done with care, attention, and a little coaching — help control appetite, improve food quality, promote exercise, and raise nutritional awareness.

3. Coaches should never lock into a single philosophy.

In the last 15 years, our coaching programs have helped over 100,000 clients lose more than a million pounds of body fat and develop a new relationship with food.

And we've done that without forcing a specific diet philosophy on them. Vegans can stay vegan. Paleos can stay Paleo. And they've *all* had success.

If you're working with a coach who tells you that you have to eat a very specific way to succeed... well, you might want to re-think that relationship.

And coaches: Don't waste energy bullying people into a particular way of eating. It's not necessary.

4. Habit-based coaching is more effective than diet-based coaching anyway.

Long-term nutrition *habits* trump diet plans and “rules”. Always.

We prefer a **nutritional progression model** (which builds habits intelligently and sustainably over time) versus asking people to “follow a diet” (which means doing a full lifestyle overhaul on day one).

So, the best diet to follow actually is ...

... the one that's best for you.

If you want to follow a Paleo diet, we can help with that.

We can also help out if you're vegan, prefer to eat more carbs (or less), are on a tight budget, or only eat organic / free range artisan foods.

But, really, what I'd like you to follow is what I call “precision nutrition”.

Let me listen to your needs. What you want to accomplish. How you live. What's really important to you. Then let me help you create the right dietary approach for you; one that's specific to your goals and your lifestyle.

Because that's what coaching really is.

Diet gurus are in this game to get attention, make a scene, and get on TV. That's why they try to force people into following strict and largely unnecessary nutrition rules — demonizing some foods, deifying others.

Sure, it sells books. It gives good TV. But we all know how things turn out when real people try to follow these rules in real life.

The best coaches, on the other hand, are actually responsible for (and accountable to) their clients. **They're paid to get results.** This totally changes the game.

That's why I don't really have a diet philosophy. Instead, I have a personal coaching *process*.

One that helps clients find the best diet for them. One that takes into account their small (but still important) physical and biochemical differences. And one that takes into account their lifestyle differences, including:

- family
- life demands
- stress level
- work situation
- income level
- food availability
- cooking experience and knowledge
- time availability
- physical capability
- and so on ...

No, it's not as clearcut as "avoid meat" or "eat like a caveman".

But I believe it's the only sane and rational approach.

It also happens to be the only approach that actually works in the long run.



MEAL PLANS USUALLY SUCK.

Here are 6 better ways to transform your diet.

By Brian St. Pierre

Lots of people looking to improve their eating think meal plans are the answer. The only problem? Meal plans usually suck... and they rarely last. So, instead of prescribing yet another doomed eating regimen, check out these 6 ways to transform any diet in a sustainable way.

“Do I get a meal plan?”

This is the most common question we get from folks who are considering, or just started out in, our nutrition coaching programs.

The answer: No, we don't do meal plans.

But we can't blame people for asking.

Sure, meal plans have long been a staple of the fitness and nutrition industry. Coaches are taught to create them. Clients are taught to expect them.

Unfortunately:

Most of the time, meal plans don't work.

You see, traditional meal plans are explicit prescriptions.

Eat this exact thing, in this exact amount, at this exact time.

For example, you'll often see:

Breakfast – 7:30am

- 3 eggs, scrambled
- 1 cup vegetables
- 1 piece whole grain toast
- 1 cup coffee
- 1 glass water

Morning snack – 10:00am

- 1 protein bar
- 1 handful mixed nuts

Lunch – 12:30pm

4 oz chicken
2 cups salad
1 handful seeds
1 glass water

After exercise – 4:30pm

1 scoop whey protein
1/2 cup frozen fruit
1 tsp omega 3 oil
12 oz water

Dinner – 7:00pm

4 oz steak
1 cup cooked veggies
1 baked potato
1 glass water

You (or your clients/patients) might be thinking, “Good! I want a plan. I’m sick of trying to figure all this stuff out! Just tell me what to eat!”

Unfortunately, when we try to follow rigid prescriptions like this, lots can (and often does) go wrong.

For example:

Scenario 1: You just don't stick to the plan.

No matter how enthusiastic you are, meal plans can be tough to follow.

This is normal. Life can get in the way.

- People get busy,
- we're not always prepared,
- kids get sick,
- bosses expect you to work late,
- it's always someone's birthday (or a special holiday), and
- sometimes you just don't feel like having a protein bar at 10am.

What's more, even if you've actually paid to have someone make your plan, you might find yourself rebelling against it in subtle (or not-so-subtle) ways. This is also normal.

Unfortunately, it means you might not get the results you hope for. For instance, a meal plan you hoped would help you lose weight could actually encourage you to gain weight instead.

Scenario 2: You follow the plan perfectly.

In fact, you follow it too well and for too long.

Most meal plans are meant to be temporary.

They're designed to help a person get to a specific short-term goal, like dropping a few extra pounds before a wedding, learning to manage blood sugar, or cutting weight for an athletic competition.

Our bodies can usually adapt to a rigid way of eating for a short period of time.

But if you're too strict for too long, you could wind up with disordered eating habits and lasting health (mental, metabolic, hormonal, etc) consequences.

Scenario 3: You follow the plan for a little while but it sucks.

It isn't sustainable. It doesn't make you feel better. It doesn't keep you sane.

Maybe you see some short-term results (or not). But you hate living and eating this way. You never want to see another stupid piece of lettuce or 4 ounces of chicken.

Eventually, you get so turned off by the process that you regress or quit altogether. You conclude that "eating healthy" sucks.

And you miss your big chance to learn how to make healthier, more enjoyable, more *lasting* and *real* changes.

Another reason meal plans fail

One of the biggest (yet generally unacknowledged) problems with traditional meal plans is their focus on “nutrients”.

Real people don't eat “nutrients”. We eat food.

We eat meals, often with other people.

We eat meals that match our cultural background and social interests.

And we rarely measure things precisely.

Sure, *sometimes* an explicit prescription is necessary.

For instance, professional athletes or bodybuilders (in other words, people who make money off their bodies and athletic skills) use meal plans to prepare for training and competition.

A prescribed meal for someone in that situation might look something like this:

- 1/4 cup dry oats
- 3 oz turkey breast
- 1 cup steamed broccoli
- 5 almonds
- 1 omega-3 supplement
- 1 cup green tea (unsweetened)

But most of us don't need that level of surgical precision.

We don't normally eat "ounces" of things, or refer to food by their nutrients (like "omega-3 fatty acids"). Instead, we eat foods like:

- hamburgers
- tacos and burritos
- salads
- pasta and noodles
- sandwiches, wraps, pitas and rotis
- stews and curries
- cereal and granola
- stir-fries
- casseroles

Bottom line: If you want to eat better, you don't have to get weird about things. You don't need to weigh and measure everything, or count out your almonds.

Ask yourself: "Is someone paying me to do this?" If the answer is no, you likely don't need this kind of approach.

You just need to think about what you're *already* eating, and how you could make it *a little bit better*.

This means fiddling and adjusting.

Making small changes and improvements to what you *already normally eat and enjoy*, one small step at a time.

Think about a *spectrum* of food quality rather than "bad" or "good" foods.

Welcome to the meal transformation game

When you play with the idea of a food spectrum or food continuum, you get to experiment with variables like:

- **what you eat;** and
- **how you eat it.**

Think of this as a game

How can you play “make this meal just a little bit better” in every situation?

In which situations is that easier or harder?

When your choices are limited (for instance, when you’re traveling, or eating at a workplace cafeteria), how can you shoot for “a little bit better” while still being realistic, and without trying to be “perfect”?

Let’s transform breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Here’s how that “food spectrum” might look in daily life, with a sample day of eating.

Transforming breakfast

Stage 1

Let's say that your go-to breakfast is a whipped-cream coffee drink and a chocolate croissant.

You pick it up in the drive-thru, and wolf it down on your way to work.

This is your starting point. It's not "bad". It's just no longer working for you. You're getting indigestion from rushing, the croissant doesn't hold you at all, and you've just spilled the coffee on your crotch while changing lanes.

Now your game is to improve your breakfast just a little bit, starting with what you already have or do.



Stage 2

Your opening moves in the meal transformation game:

- You might replace the croissant with a whole grain muffin.
- Instead of a “dessert in a cup”, you get a regular coffee with a single cream and sugar.
- You grab a yogurt cup on your way out of the house for a bit of protein.

Naturally, you’re still rushed and busy... so you eat your breakfast with some distractions, while scrolling through emails at work.

But this is a solid start. Well done.



Stage 3

Next level of game play:

- You switch the muffin to granola with cottage cheese or Greek yogurt.
- You switch the cream in your coffee for 2% milk. (Or even go right to black coffee, you meal player you!)
- You add some colorful fruit.
- You're now eating out of dishes on a table, instead of out of takeout packages off the dashboard of your car.

Of course, you're still checking out the news headlines while you eat...

No problem. We're keeping it real.



Stage 4

Now you are seriously playing like a pro.

- You've changed “rushing and panicked” to “set aside a little extra time to enjoy a leisurely breakfast”.
- You cleverly prepped an egg frittata with veggies in advance on your food prep day.
- The coffee's become green tea, since you noticed that too much coffee was tweaking you out.
- The protein plus colorful fruit and veg have become the stars of the meal.
- You've discovered you really like lemon water. (WHAT? You don't even know you anymore!)
- You eat mindfully, feeling relaxed, while watching the sun rise.

Ahhh.



Transforming lunch

Stage 1

At this point, starting out, the idea of a sit-down lunch feels flat out ridiculous.

“Eat slowly? Who has time for that during a busy workday? Grab a burger and go!”

Another “car dashboard” meal. Another stomach ache and regret.

You decide you might want to play with this meal too.



Stage 2

To improve this meal a little bit:

- You go to a higher-end burger place where you're pretty sure they use real meat.
- You get a side salad with that burger, and maybe just a few potato chips.
- You choose a diet soda instead of regular.
- You don't eat in your car, but you do eat by your computer.

That's OK. You're progressing.



Stage 3

At this stage, you're doing a little prep work.

- You whipped up some burgers in advance so they are handy and ready to take to work.
- You also grabbed some nice cheese and whole grain buns from the local market on shopping day.

For lunch, all you have to do is take your homemade burger and its fixins to work.

You still grab a diet cola from the vending machine to wash it down.

You move from your desk to the lunchroom, where you socialize with coworkers. This slows you down a bit and helps you digest and relax.



Stage 4

You're having the burger without the bun, alongside a nice pre-prepped salad.

Instead of staying at your desk or in the office, you take a break.

You sit outside and get some fresh air while you enjoy your meal.

For a drink, water's all you need.



Transforming dinner

Stage 1

It's 8pm. You've just gotten home after an insane day at work.

All you want to do is put food into your face and zone out in front of the TV.

You can't even imagine making anything more complicated than boxed macaroni 'n' cheese right now.

Ketchup and hot dogs are as fancy as it gets.



Stage 2

Same concept, but:

- You're adding some extra protein with the help of a rotisserie chicken leg that you grabbed at the grocery store on the way home.
- You've added a side salad, just grabbing a few handfuls of pre-washed greens out of a bag.
- You've whipped up your own pasta.

Work is still on your mind, and a couple drinks will take the edge off.



Stage 3

Things are getting fancy.

- You're upping the protein with a little more chicken.
- You're having a little less pasta.
- You've also added a nice big salad to the mix.
- You've cut the booze to 1 drink.

Plus, you're sitting at the dinner table, instead of flopping down on your couch or standing over the sink.



Stage 4

Again, we're playing at pro level here.

With your meal planning and prep strategies, even a weeknight dinner looks good.

- You can whip up a delicious salad in 3 minutes flat and you have some pre-cooked quinoa on hand.
- That rotisserie chicken is still a fast, convenient option, but now it's got some healthy buddies.
- You're indulging in a single glass of good wine these days, and you take time to savor it.



Meal transformation is not about reaching perfection.

If you're at stage 1, all you have to do is shoot for stage 2. Or stage 1.5.

If you're in stage 2, play with getting to stage 3.

And if you're stage 3, heck, you can stay where you are.

You might never get to stage 4. Or it might only happen at times when you're relaxed and have a little extra time.

Stage 4 might only happen on Sunday night, whereas the rest of your week is a mix of stages 1, 2, and — if you're super lucky — 3.

And that's OK.

How far you progress along the continuum all depends on what YOU want, what YOU need, and what YOU can reasonably do, right now.

Over time, things can change.

Play YOUR game.

Success secret: Have a food prep ritual.

You might look at these photos and think, “How can people possibly do all that?”

One success secret: Having a food prep ritual.

The idea is simple:

Practice planning and preparing healthy food *in advance*.

This makes healthy eating convenient and easy.

It also makes decisions easier: You don't have to make a choice when you're rushed and hungry.

Your food prep ritual can include:

- Shopping (or arranging to have food delivered)
- Menu and meal planning
- Washing and chopping vegetables
- Cooking/preparing protein (e.g. cooking up some chicken breasts)
- Cooking meals in bulk (e.g. casseroles, soups, stews, chili)
- Preparing the dry ingredients for things like Super Shakes or healthy muffin mix
- Soaking grains/beans beforehand so that they'll be ready to cook later
- Sorting foods into individually portioned containers and baggies
- Freezing and refrigerating food for later
- Planning healthy meals that someone else cooks (e.g. using a meal delivery service, deciding in advance what to order at a restaurant, etc.)
- Looking ahead to ensure healthy eating strategies during the next few days, especially during difficult times (e.g. a busy week, traveling, dealing with a family crisis, etc.)

Mix and match any of these to find what works for you.

Experiment with systems, skills and strategies that work for YOU and YOUR life.

The real goal of a meal plan is to stop using a meal plan.

Fit, healthy people who have a good relationship with food don't need other people to tell them exactly what to eat at all times.

Living a fit and healthy life doesn't require perfection, either.

If you are using a meal plan:

That's OK.

Some people like prescription, especially if they are working towards a specific short-term goal, like cutting weight to compete in wrestling, making sure they get enough nutrients to support a healthy pregnancy, or fueling their triathlon performance.

Keep it short-lived.

Meal plans are supposed to be temporary, working towards a short-term goal.

Keep it real.

As much as possible, try to make the meal plan fit your real life, not the other way around.

If you're a parent, a worker, a student, or anyone else living in the real world, most of your meals will fall somewhere in the stages 1 through 3 spectrum. That's perfectly OK. Just experiment with being a little bit better, wherever you can.

Remember all goals require trade-offs.

If you want to achieve a high level of performance or exceptional body composition, understand what you are prioritizing and sacrificing.

Getting very lean, for instance, comes with costs.

Make sure it's working for you.

If your meal plan is making you feel:

- overwhelmed
- anxious and fretful
- guilty
- regretful
- bad
- overly rigid and/or preoccupied with food...

...or any other negative, unproductive emotion...

...and if you find that meal plans result in you:

- “falling off the wagon”, hard
- getting obsessive and compulsive about food
- restricting foods and food groups...
- doing “all or nothing”, usually ending with “nothing”

...then consider trying another approach.

What to do next

1. Consider where you sit on the spectrum of meal “stages”.

Where’s your food game at?

What level are you playing at?

What level would you like to play at?

Given your goals and your current situation, what is realistic?

For example, if you currently eat at stage 1, your goal might be to eat at stage 2 for most meals.

Or, if you eat at stage 3 most of the time but find yourself dipping into stage 1 or 2 meals more often than you’d like, aim to stay at stage 3 a little more consistently.

2. Start small. One step at a time.

Pick one meal to transform and focus on that.

For instance, you might leave all your other meals at stage 1, and focus on getting lunch to stage 2.

Concentrate on improving that one meal each day.

Using the examples above, you might think about things like:

- adding protein
- adding veggies or fruits

- eating less processed food
- eating more nutrient-dense, whole foods
- drinking less alcohol or fewer sweet drinks
- drinking more water
- eating in a calmer, more relaxed setting
- eating more slowly and mindfully

Of course, don't try to do all these at once.

Try just fiddling with one or two, and see which ones work best for you.

3. Add things slowly.

Once you've improved one meal a day, try another.

If you feel like lunch is a solid stage 2 or 3, play with moving breakfast, dinner, or snacks along the spectrum.

Or, once you've improved one factor in a meal (e.g. adding more protein), try another.

For instance, if you're getting more protein, now try switching out your sugary soda for some soda water. Or adding a little more veggies.

Be patient.

4. Set yourself up for success.

Notice what makes it easier and *simpler* for you to eat better.

Then figure out how to do or get more of that.

For instance:

- Is planning helping you? How could you do more of that?
- Is healthy meal delivery making it easy? Could you set aside a little more cash to get two meals a day instead of one?
- Is setting aside time on Sunday afternoon to cook some protein a good idea? Great, keep on doing that. Book it in your calendar.

There's no "right" way to do this. Do what works for YOU.

5. Enjoy your meals.

Meal plans don't usually address how you eat.

Before you change what you eat, you can also try changing how you eat. For example, you could:

- slow down
- breathe between bites
- relax
- savor your food
- sit at a table if you can
- use real dishes if you can.

Give yourself some time and space to appreciate those tasty concoctions you put together.

Meal time is YOUR time.

6. Work towards being your own boss.

Sometimes you might just want someone to tell you what to do.

That's fine, and helpful, especially if you're juggling a lot. But only for a while.

Over time, look for ways to help yourself *intuitively and wisely* make better choices, rather than just following the rules.

Think long-term. What do you want to happen over the next few months? Year? 10 years? Do you want to be on a meal plan for the next few decades?

Today, if you were to take one small step towards the “better” end of the meal spectrum, what might that look like?

How can you start playing the “meal transformation game” today?



FORGET CALORIE COUNTING:

**Try this calorie control guide
for men and women.**

By Ryan Andrews & Brian St. Pierre

Math? To plan dinner? Isn't there a better way? Yes there is. Just take a look at your hand. Use your fist, palm, cupped hand, and thumb to practice calorie control – while avoiding the hassle of counting calories.

If you've heard it once, you've heard it a thousand times: The best — maybe even the *only* — way to lose weight is to count calories.

After all, it's a pretty simple equation: Calories in vs. calories out. Eat more calories than you burn, and you gain weight. Eat fewer calories than you burn and you lose weight.

Except counting calories isn't that simple.

The problems with calorie counting

First of all — on the “calories in” side — you do need to figure out how many calories are in the foods you want to eat. And that takes handbooks, websites, databases and math. Just to plan your lunch. Groan.

Next, you have to assume that the handbooks, websites, and databases' calorie estimates are correct. They're often not. In fact, research has shown they can be off by about 25% because of incorrect labeling, laboratory measurement error, and food quality.

Then, of course, there's the “calories out” side. Estimating your calorie expenditure each day comes with another 25% measurement error because of the equipment you're using, laboratory measurement errors, and individual differences.

A possible 25% error on the “calories in” side, and *another* 25% error on the “calories out” side.

Is it even worth:

- pulling out measuring cups to a chorus of boos from family members;
- dusting off the food scale while trying to ignore the taunts of friends;
- wheeling in the abacus from the den to keep up the calorie tally;
- subscribing to apps and web services to track these less-than-accurate numbers?

Sure, we should have an idea of how much food we're eating each day, so we can adjust based on our goals.

But counting calories itself is a drag! No wonder so many people give up and go back to eating the way they were before.

The calorie counting antidote

Here's the good news: **counting calories is rarely necessary.**

Our Precision Nutrition coaching programs gauge food portions differently. No carrying around weigh-scales and measuring cups. No calculators or smart phones.

All you need is the ability to count to two. And your own hand. Here's how it works:

- Your **palm** determines your **protein** portions.
- Your **fist** determines your **veggie** portions.
- Your **cupped** hand determines your **carb** portions.
- Your **thumb** determines your **fat** portions.

To determine your protein intake

For protein-dense foods like meat, fish, eggs, dairy, or legumes, use a palm sized serving.



For men we recommend ~ 2 palm-sized portions with each meal.



For women we recommend ~ 1 palm-sized portion with each meal.

Note: a palm-sized portion is the same thickness and diameter as your palm.

To determine your vegetable intake

For veggies like broccoli, spinach, salad, carrots, etc. use a fist-sized serving.



For men we recommend \sim 2 fist-sized portions of vegetables with each meal.



And for women we recommend \sim 1 fist-sized portion of vegetables with each meal. Again, a fist-sized portion is the same thickness and diameter as your fist.

To determine your carbohydrate intake

For carbohydrate-dense foods – like grains, starches, or fruits – use a cupped hand to determine your serving size.



For men we recommend \sim 2 cupped-hand sized portions of carbohydrates with most meals.



And for women we recommend \sim 1 cupped-hand sized portion of carbohydrates with most meals.

To determine your fat intake

For fat-dense foods – like oils, butters, nut butters, nuts/seeds – use your entire thumb to determine your serving size.



For men we recommend \sim 2 thumb-sized portions of fats with most meals.



And for women we recommend \sim 1 thumb-sized portion of fats with most meals.

A note on body size

Of course, if you're a bigger person, you probably have a bigger hand. And if you're a smaller person... well, you get the idea. Your own hand is a personalized (and portable) measuring device for your food intake.

True, some people do have larger or smaller hands for their body size. Still, our hand size correlates pretty closely with general body size, including muscle, bone – the whole package.

Planning your meals flexibly

Based on the guidelines above, which assume you'll be eating about 4 times a day, you now have a simple and flexible guide for meal planning.

For men:

- ~ **2 palms of protein dense foods** with each meal;
- ~ **2 fists of vegetables** with each meal;
- ~ **2 cupped hands of carb dense foods** with most meals;
- ~ **2 entire thumbs of fat dense foods** with most meals.

For women:

- ~ **1 palm of protein dense foods** with each meal;
- ~ **1 fist of vegetables** with each meal;
- ~ **1 cupped hand of carb dense foods** with most meals;
- ~ **1 entire thumb of fat dense foods** with most meals.

Of course, just like any other form of nutrition planning — including calorie counting — this serves as a starting point.

You can't know exactly how your body will respond in advance. So stay flexible and adjust your portions based on your hunger, fullness, and other important goals.

For example: if you're trying to gain weight, and you're having trouble gaining, you might add another cupped palm of carbohydrates or another thumb of fats. Likewise, if you're trying to lose weight but seem to have stalled out, you might eliminate a cupped palm of carbohydrates or a thumb of fats at particular meals.

Remember: This is a starting point. Adjust your portions at any time using outcome-based decision making, aka “How's that working for you?”

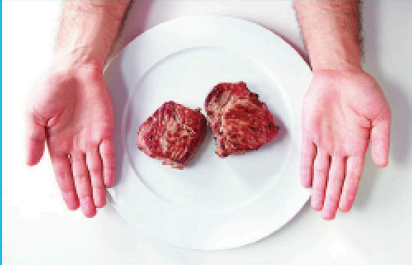
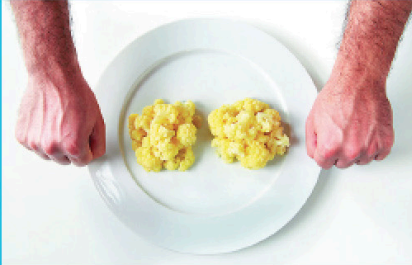
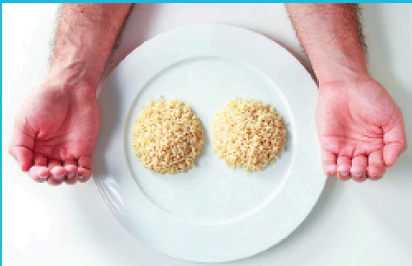

Our calorie control guide

To make this even easier, we created a simple guide for men and women that summarizes our recommendations.

Calorie Control: A Simple Guide


FOR MEN

Calorie counting is often complicated, tedious, and inaccurate. So, at Precision Nutrition, we've come up with an easier way to control calories. No weigh-scales or measuring cups. No calculators or smart phones. Just the ability to count to two. And your hand. To build your meals:

	
2 palms of protein dense foods with each meal	2 fists of vegetables with each meal
	
2 cupped handfuls of carb dense foods with most meals	2 entire thumbs of fat dense foods with most meals

Note: Your hand size is related to your body size, making it an excellent portable and personalized way to measure and track food intake.

Also note: Just like any other form of nutrition planning, this guide serves as a starting point. Stay flexible and adjust your portions based on hunger, fullness, and other important goals.

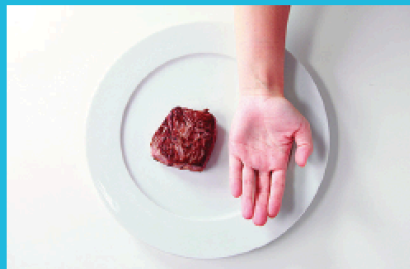

PrecisionNutrition

Calorie Control: A Simple Guide

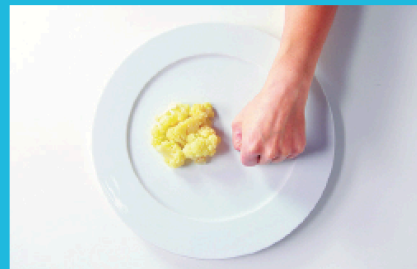
FOR WOMEN

Calorie counting is often complicated, tedious, and inaccurate. So, at Precision Nutrition, we've come up with an easier way to control calories. No weigh-scales or measuring cups. No calculators or smart phones. Just the ability to count to two.

And your hand. To build your meals:



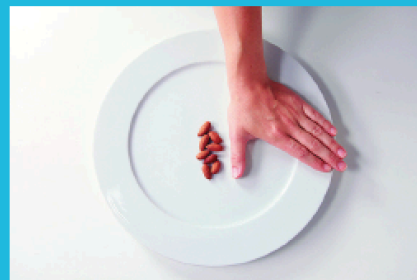
1 palm of protein dense foods with each meal



1 fist of vegetables with each meal



1 cupped handful of carb dense foods with most meals



1 entire thumb of fat dense foods with most meals

Note: Your hand size is related to your body size, making it an excellent portable and personalized way to measure and track food intake.

Also note: Just like any other form of nutrition planning, this guide serves as a starting point. Stay flexible and adjust your portions based on hunger, fullness, and other important goals.



PrecisionNutrition

In the end, if you'd like to start eating better, just take a look at your hand.

Use your fist, palm, cupped hand, and thumb to practice calorie control – while avoiding the hassle of counting calories.





THE BEST CALORIE CONTROL GUIDE. [INFOGRAPHIC]

Estimating portion size and food intake just got a whole lot easier.

By Brian St. Pierre

Head swimming with calorie numbers and daily allowances? Trust us...there's a better way to measure your portions. Try this calorie control guide. It's practical, powerful, and proven with over 100,000 clients

Trying to gain muscle? Lose weight? Just eat healthy?

Then finding the right portions is probably on your mind.

But calorie counting is usually a recipe for failure: It's annoying, impractical, and research shows it can be up to 25 percent inaccurate on both sides — calories in, and calories out.

We can't stand it. So we came up with a better way for Precision Nutrition Coaching clients — and anyone else who wants to look and feel better — to get the right amount and balance of food at every meal.

PORTION CONTROL GUIDE

FORGET CALORIE COUNTING. TRY THIS METHOD INSTEAD.

Most people think controlling portions means counting calories, but we think there's a better way. Try our (much easier) Hand Measure system instead.

YOUR HAND IS ALL YOU NEED

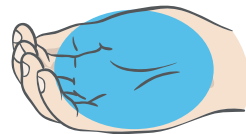
Your hand is proportionate to your body, its size never changes, and it's always with you, making it the perfect tool for measuring food and nutrients - minimal counting required.



A serving of protein
= 1 palm



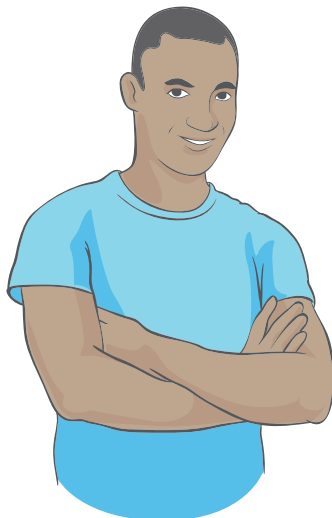
A serving of
vegetables = 1 fist



A serving of carbs =
1 cupped hand

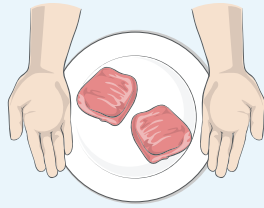


A serving of
fats = 1 thumb



HERE'S HOW TO USE THIS METHOD TO BUILD A PLATE



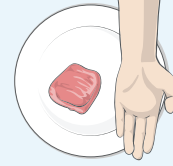


Men:
Two palm-sized portions
(~ 40-60 g protein)

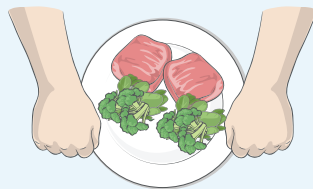
STEP 1

PROTEIN

Meat, fish, eggs,
cottage cheese,
and Greek yogurt



Women:
One palm-sized portion
(~ 20-30 g protein)

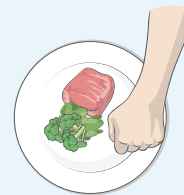


Men:
Two fist-sized portions

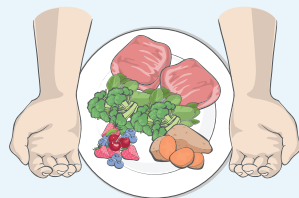
STEP 2

VEGETABLES

Broccoli, spinach,
salad, carrots, etc.



Women:
One fist-sized portion

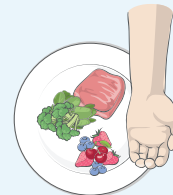


Men:
Two cupped-hand sized portions
(~ 40-60 g carbs)

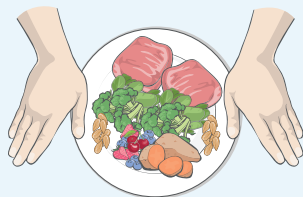
STEP 3

CARBOHYDRATES

Grains, starches,
beans, and fruits



Women:
One cupped-hand sized portion
(~ 20-30 g carbs)

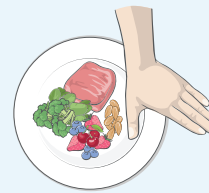


Men:
Two thumb-sized portions
(~ 15-25 g fat)

STEP 4

FATS

Oils, butters,
nut butters, nuts,
and seeds



Women:
One thumb-sized portion
(~ 7-12 g fat)

Men eating 3-4 meals as outlined would get around 2,300 - 3,000 calories each day. Women eating 3-4 meals as outlined would get around 1,200 - 1,500 calories each day.

NOW, CUSTOMIZE THE PLAN FOR YOU

Active men do best with 6-8 servings of each food group per day (~2,300-3,000 kcal). Active women do best with 4-6 servings of each food group per day (~1,500 - 2,100 kcal).

From there, adjust the number of portions to meet your personal needs and goals.

IF YOU NEED MORE FOOD BECAUSE YOU...

- Are larger in stature
- Aren't feeling satisfied at meals
- Eat less frequently throughout the day
- Are very active
- Are trying to gain muscle
- Aren't getting muscle-gain results

...THEN START BY ADDING...

Men: 1 cupped handful of carbs and/or 1 thumb of fat to a few meals each day.

Women: 1/2 cupped handful of carbs and/or 1/2 thumb of fat to a few meals each day.

IF YOU NEED LESS FOOD BECAUSE YOU...

- Are smaller in stature
- Are feeling too full at meals
- Eat more frequently throughout the day
- Are not very active
- Are trying to lose weight
- Aren't getting weight-loss results

...THEN START BY REMOVING...

Men: 1 cupped handful of carbs and/or 1 thumb of fat from a few meals each day.

Women: 1/2 cupped handful of carbs and/or 1/2 thumb of fat from a few meals each day.

This system is easier than counting calories and nearly as accurate. Just like with counting, though, pay attention to results and adjust as needed.



3 KEY STRATEGIES FOR HAVING HEALTHY FOOD AVAILABLE WHEN YOU NEED IT.

These make meal planning a no-brainer.

By John Berardi, Ph.D.

An epic hunt for healthy food every time you're hungry? Who's got the time? Instead, try these 3 key strategies for having healthy food available when you need it. They'll help make meal planning a no-brainer.

One of the many important lessons we teach our clients: Keep it simple. Think *less*. Make *fewer* decisions. Let your environment do much of the work for you.

If healthy food is around you and convenient, you're more likely to eat it. If you have a trusted system for making healthy food available, you don't have to decide to eat well... you just show up and do it.

Enter the “food ritual”.

No, this ritual doesn't include lamb's blood or any special Kool Aid.

It just means you set aside a bit of time to prepare some healthy food in advance so that it's ready, available, and convenient when you need it.

How you choose to ritualize healthy meal prep is up to you. Here are some strategies that have worked well for the men and women who have had the most success in Precision Nutrition Coaching.

Option 1: The Sunday Ritual

You don't have to do this on Sunday, of course. You can choose any day you like. It's just that Sunday is often a time when people are more free, more relaxed, and more able to devote time to this type of task. And it's a time when we're usually thinking ahead to the upcoming week.

Whatever day you choose, set aside 2-3 hours once a week to do the following.

- **Look ahead to your upcoming schedule and see what's happening.** What nutrition challenges or opportunities might

pop up? Where might you need some special preparation in advance? What are the quiet and busy times? Etc.

- **Come up with a general menu for at least the next few days.** It doesn't have to be anything in-depth. Just get a basic sense of the food you might need to have on hand for the week ahead.
- **Build your shopping list from your menu.** This will help you be as effective and efficient as possible when you hit the grocery store, and you'll be less tempted to buy random (and non-goal-supporting) things.
- **Hit the grocery store.** Stock up on what you need for the week. Consider grabbing a few extra "just in case" emergency items as well, such as canned beans, frozen vegetables, or other easily-stored healthy options that you can use in a pinch.
- **Once you're back home, start prepping and cooking.** Whip up a batch of lean protein — for example, by grilling or roasting several chicken breasts/thighs at once. Try some one-pot meals that can be easily cooked in a slow cooker, then divided into containers to be frozen or refrigerated, such as soups, stews, curries, chili, etc. Wash and chop veggies.



Why slice tomatoes for one meal when you can slice them for three?



It takes just as much time to bake one chicken breast...



...as it does to bake several.

Some Precision Nutrition Coaching clients choose to prepare most of their meals for the week on Sundays.

Others prefer to figure out which meals will be easy to cook “in the moment” and save them for later, and only pre-prepare meals for super busy times (such as lunches at work or dinner after a late meeting).

Do what works best for *you*, and your schedule.

If possible, give yourself a little extra buffer zone. You never know what unexpected challenge might strike at 6pm on Wednesday, and when it does, you’ll be glad you stocked away an extra meal in the freezer.



Pack up ingredients and meals for easy storage in your freezer, fridge, or workspace.

Option 2: The Daily Ritual

You can combine the Sunday Ritual with the Daily Ritual — for example, by preparing the labor-intensive staples such as lean protein on Sunday, and then adding some quick-prep items (such as fruit and veggies) every day. It often takes about as much time to prepare a few items as it does to prepare one.

For example, it's nearly as fast to chop 3 carrots as it is to chop 1, or to scramble 6 eggs instead of 2. During the Daily Ritual, you can prep a few extra items to have on hand for later in the day, or the following day.

Try a **Morning Ritual** where you use some of our time-saving strategies to whip up a healthy breakfast or lunch:

- **Oatmeal:** Shake up your dry oatmeal and any other items (e.g. ground flaxseeds, cinnamon, protein powder, other grains, etc.) in a large container. In the morning, scoop out the dry mix, pour in some water, and pop it in the microwave. Top with fruit, add more protein if you like (e.g. cottage cheese, Greek yogurt) and enjoy a hearty breakfast.



Pre-mixed oatmeal comes together faster in the morning.

- **Egg “batter”:** Whiz up some eggs in a blender (with some veggies if you like); keep the mixture in a jar in the fridge for up to three days. Pour and cook as needed.



Blend...



...store...



...and cook as needed.

- **No-sog salad:** Take a large jar and pour salad dressing into the bottom. Then add veggies, top with greens, and make sure the jar stays refrigerated and upright throughout the day. When you're ready to eat it, shake it up and pour it into a bowl (or heck, eat it right out of the jar!).



Dressing at the bottom: the trick to a still-crisp pre-prepped lunch salad.

Or try a **Dinner Ritual** where you simply make extra portions and save the rest for tomorrow.

Again, it doesn't take much more time to prepare a few extra things, so cook in bulk where possible.

Option 3: Healthy meals made *for you*

Many grocery stores — from your average Safeway or Loblaws to more upscale Whole Foods-type places — now offer a wide range of **grab-and-go meals**. Think salad bars, pre-washed and cut vegetables, and individually-portioned lean protein. There are also many specialty food store chains that offer healthy food takeout and delivery.

Some Precision Nutrition Coaching clients even sign up for a **healthy meal delivery service**, if only for one or two meals a week. If you don't enjoy cooking, or are extremely busy, you may find that having a break from the time and hassle of meal prep is worth the money. It might just mean the difference between a delicious, nourishing, physique-friendly lunchtime salad and another regrettable fast-food run.

Google “healthy meal delivery” in your area and see what pops up.



When life is extra busy, make a healthy salad bar one of your food rituals.

The bottom line: Do what works best for you — your life and your goals.

You can mix and match all of these food ritual options, in any way that works for you. **Anticipate, plan, strategize.** This is the way of (what we call) the “PN warrior”. Have fun!



WEEKLY MEAL PREP: MASTERED. [INFOGRAPHIC]

Here's how to have healthy food ready
when you need it.

By John Berardi, Ph.D.

Check out these time-saving weekly meal prep strategies, used by Precision Nutrition's most successful clients. And learn how they can help *you* prioritize healthy eating too.

Most people who come to Precision Nutrition already know what a healthy, balanced meal looks like.

The real question they have is: How do you consistently eat healthy, balanced meals in the context of *real life*?

You know, like *“I got home late, after a long meeting, then my toddler spilled an entire bottle of olive oil on the kitchen floor!”*

(Yeah, true story.)

With the following meal prep strategies, we teach our clients exactly how to have healthy food ready when they need it.

The result? A fridge full of fast, healthy options to choose from, even as life continues to unfold.

HOW TO MASTER MEAL PREP

Try the make-ahead strategies used by Precision Nutrition's most successful clients and you'll always have healthy food on hand.

WHAT A HEALTHY MEAL LOOKS LIKE

Before mastering meal prep, learn what, and how much, to eat.

Lean proteins

1-2 palms*

Carbs

1-2 cupped hands

Vegetables

1-2 fists

Fats

1-2 thumbs



ON THE WEEKEND

Prep one-pot meals and versatile ingredients like grilled chicken and roasted veggies.

STEP 1

LOOK AHEAD



For which busy days in the coming week will you need pre-prepped meals?

STEP 2

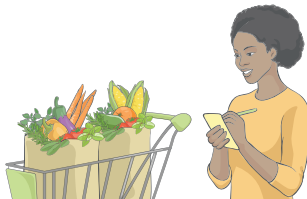
MAKE A MENU



Jot down ideas for your pre-prepped meals. Keep this general; nothing five-star.

STEP 3

SHOP FOR INGREDIENTS

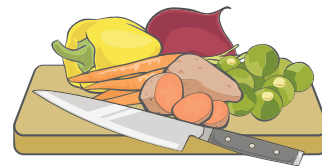


Buy the ingredients for your pre-prepped meals.

STEP 4

COOK FOR THE WEEK

Consider one-pot meals, like Dr. John's Chili below



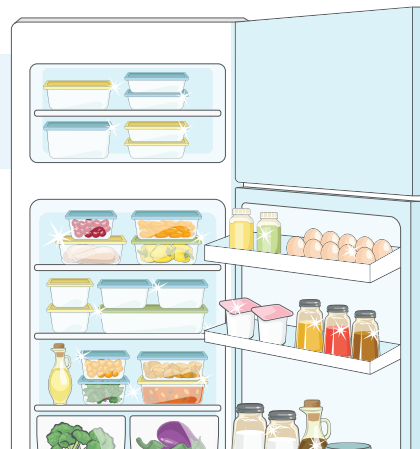
Cook time-consuming meal components: chicken, veggies, potatoes, etc.

STEP 5

STORE IT CONVENIENTLY



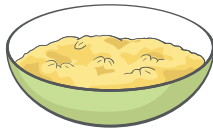
Pack your prepped food in stackable clear containers and make them accessible in the fridge.



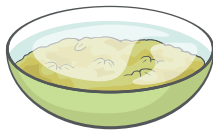
THE NIGHT BEFORE

Soak hearty foods like whole grains, beans, and oats to save up to an hour of cooking time.

GRAINS



Dump slow-cooking whole grains (like spelt, barley, or wheat berries) into a large bowl.



Cover them with a couple inches of water.



Leave them on the counter overnight.



Discard soaking water and pour soaked grains into a pot; cover with two inches of fresh water and boil until tender, 15-60 minutes.

OATMEAL



In a jar, combine equal parts rolled oats, milk, and plain yogurt (generally 1/3 - 1/2 cup each).



Mix in healthy toppings like fresh or dried fruit, nuts, seeds, spices and/or protein powder.

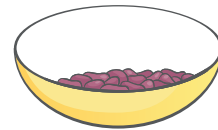


Cover and store in the fridge overnight.

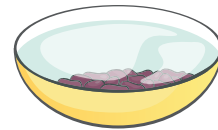


Enjoy for breakfast warm or cold.

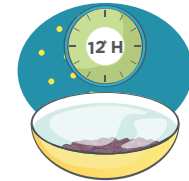
BEANS



Pour 1 part beans into a large bowl.



Cover with 4 parts water.



Leave them on the counter overnight.



Discard soaking water and pour 1 part soaked beans into a pot; cover with 3 parts fresh water and boil until tender, 45-60 minutes.

IN THE MORNING

Do quicker prep tasks like washing, chopping, boiling, and toasting.

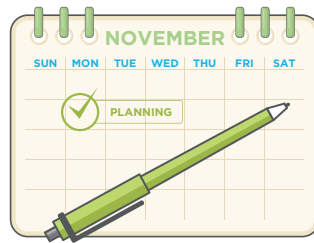
**STEP
1**



WORK WITH YOUR ROUTINE

Pair food prep with a daily activity like your morning coffee, making lunches, or watching the news.

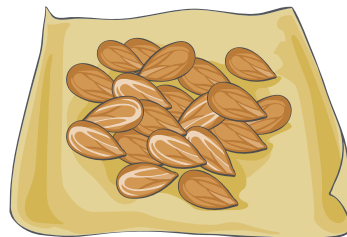
**STEP
2**



PUT IT ON THE CALENDAR

So you won't forget — and you can reschedule if the unexpected comes up. 15 minutes should do the trick.

**STEP
3**



PREP IN BULK

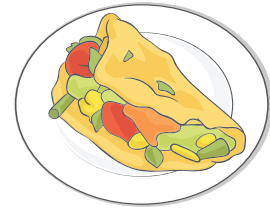
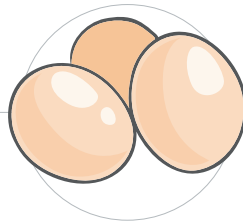
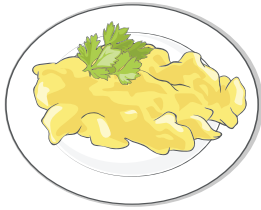
Slicing a few carrots is as fast as slicing one. Same with toasting almonds or chopping herbs.

TWO FOR ONE

Prep foods that will keep for a day or two, but not longer.

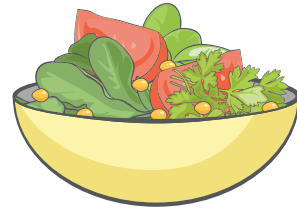
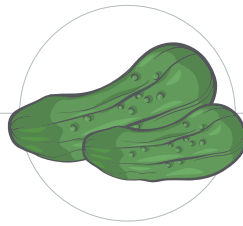
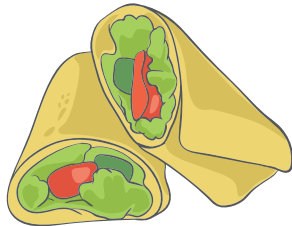
BREAKFAST

Scrambling eggs on Monday? Whisk six eggs instead of two, and store the extra liquid for Wednesday's omelettes.



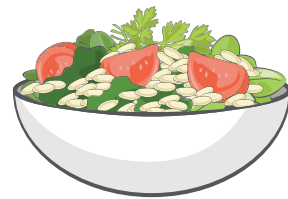
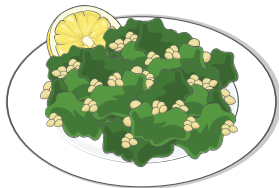
LUNCH

Slice cucumber for today's hummus wrap, and extras for tomorrow's salad.



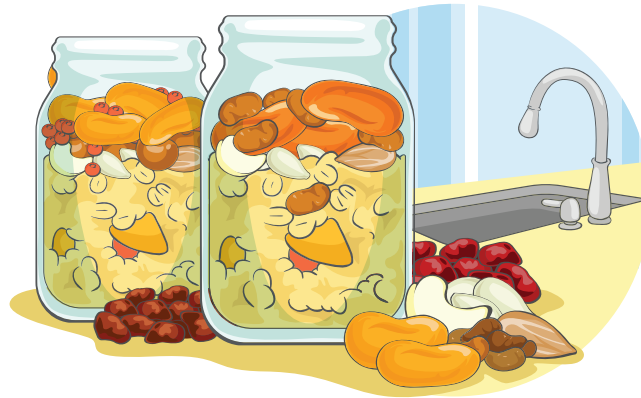
DINNER

Wash and chop kale for tonight's couscous, and extra for tomorrow's orzo salad.



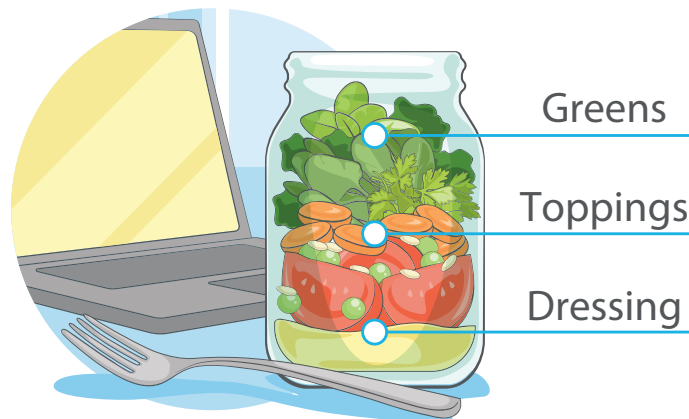
IN A JAR

Keep these pre-mixed meals handy at home or work for instant breakfasts and lunches.



OATMEAL

In a large jar, combine uncooked oats with toppings like nuts, seeds, dried fruit, and spices. At breakfast time, simply scoop a serving into a pot, add water, and cook.



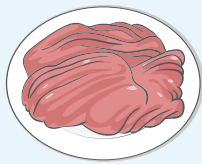
SALAD

Pour a serving of salad dressing into a large jar. Add toppings like sliced veggies, nuts, and cheese, then top with lettuce. Seal lid and store upright. Shake and eat.

DR. JOHN'S CHILI

Make it on Sunday and keep it in the fridge for fast meals all week long.

INGREDIENTS



4 lb extra lean
ground beef (96%)



2 large onions,
chopped



6 garlic cloves,
chopped



4 tbsp chili
powder



1 tsp cumin
2 tsp paprika



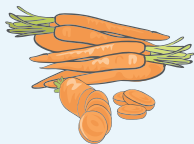
1 tsp celery seed
1 tsp fresh
ground pepper



4 (15 1/2 ounce)
cans kidney beans,
drained and rinsed



2 large tomatoes,
chopped



1 lb carrots,
peeled and
sliced



4 bell peppers: (green,
red, yellow, orange) cut
into 1/2-inch squares



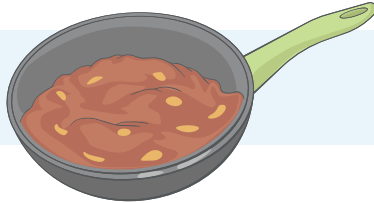
2 (46 oz) bottles
vegetable juice,
spicy hot



1/2 cup cashew
meal

INSTRUCTIONS

STEP 1



Brown ground beef over high heat with garlic and onions. Add spices and fry for 2 minutes.

STEP 2



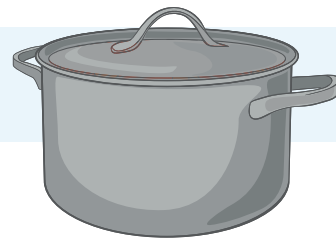
Add browned beef, beans, tomatoes, carrots, peppers, and vegetable juice to a very large pot and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer.

STEP 3

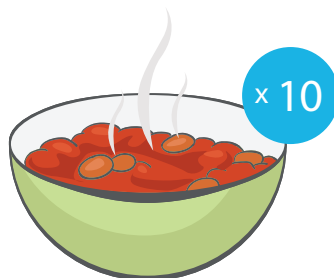


Pulse cashews in a blender until a grainy meal is formed.

STEP 4



Stir cashew meal into chili, cover, and simmer for an additional 30 minutes.



MAKES 10 SERVINGS.

No need to try all these strategies. Start slow, and do what works for you. Once you get in a rhythm, prepping meals in advance is really easy.



CREATE THE PERFECT MEAL WITH THIS SIMPLE 5-STEP GUIDE. [INFOGRAPHIC]

**Hundreds of healthy meal
combinations made easy.**

By John Berardi, Ph.D.

You know you need a good balance of proteins, carbs, fats. But how do you turn that knowledge into healthy meals that taste delicious? Just mix and match these ingredients, flavor profiles, and cooking methods to create the perfect meal every time. Seriously, this guide could change your life.

At Precision Nutrition, it's our mission to help clients develop healthy eating habits for life. That means:

- Eating fresh, minimally-processed food as often as possible.
- Including a balance of protein, veggies, smart carbs, healthy fats.
- Adjusting portions to meet health and body composition goals.

That all sounds great. But the trick is to do it all in a way that's super-easy and tastes awesome.

That's where Precision Nutrition's all-star chef, Jennifer Nickle, comes in. Jen's been chef to UFC legend Georges St-Pierre and to tennis pros like Sloane Stephens and Eugenie Bouchard. She's taught some of the best athletes in the world how to eat.

And now it's your turn.

Behold the Perfect Meal cheat sheet.

For the past few weeks Jen and I have been working together to create a cheat sheet that helps clients build amazing meals that pack in maximum flavor with minimal effort. And it's finally ready.

Using the simple instructions in this infographic, you'll be able to mix and match ingredients and flavor profiles to come up with *a ton* of easy, delicious, health-supporting meals.

Warning: This guide could change your life.

HOW TO CREATE THE PERFECT MEAL















HUNDREDS OF EASY, DELICIOUS, HEALTHY DINNERS FROM PRECISION NUTRITION'S INGENUOUS CHEF.

Mix and match these ingredients for maximum flavor (and minimal work). The result? Hundreds of perfectly-portioned meals that taste great and support your health goals.

STEP 1

CHOOSE ONE INGREDIENT FROM EACH OF THE FOUR COLUMNS BELOW.

Make your selection based on what you're in the mood for or what's available (or both).

PROTEIN	VEGETABLE	SMART CARB	HEALTHY FAT
<p>BEANS</p>  <p>Soak 1 part beans in 3 parts water overnight. Drain, add another 3 parts fresh water and simmer on medium heat until tender, about 2 hours. Add herbs, spices and salt halfway through cooking. Store the beans in their cooking liquid for up to four days.</p> 	<p>BROCCOLI</p>  <p>Cut broccoli into large florets with long stems; rinse and drain. Place in a single layer in a large pan over medium-high heat; season with salt and oil or butter. Stir after a few minutes, once the broccoli starts to char. Cook a few more minutes; remove from heat.</p> 	<p>SPAGHETTI SQUASH</p>  <p>Preheat oven to 400° F. Cut squash in half lengthwise and scoop out center using a spoon. Season with salt and any preferred spices and bake, cut side down, on a parchment lined baking sheet for 35 minutes or until tender. Carefully flip the squash and scrape out the flesh using a fork.</p> 	<p>EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL</p> 
<p>EGGS</p>  <p>Cover eggs with 3 inches of cold water and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and cover with a lid for 8 minutes. Drain the water and fill with cold water to stop the cooking. Keep refrigerated for up to 5 days.</p> 	<p>RED CABBAGE</p>  <p>Cut into wedges, remove the core, and boil in salted water for 2 minutes. Drain and sauté with preferred spices (if using) and healthy fat. Garnish with herbs.</p> 	<p>RED POTATOES</p>  <p>Boil red potatoes in salted water until very tender. Drain and toss with herbs, salt, cracked pepper and lemon juice or vinegar.</p> 	<p>WALNUT OIL</p> 

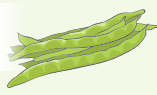
CHICKEN BREAST



Season chicken with salt, oil or butter*, and spices. Place it 'skin' side down in a pan over medium-high heat and leave it be. Add herbs and citrus to pan (if using). Reduce heat to medium, cover, and cook for about 15 minutes, flipping once at the very end. Rest it in the pan (heat off) for a few minutes.



GREEN BEANS



Warm crushed garlic and spices in oil over low heat. Meanwhile, steam the beans until they are bright green and still snappy, about 2 minutes. Toss beans with the garlic sauce.



SWEET POTATOES



Steam whole sweet potatoes for 25 minutes until very tender. Cut an incision lengthwise along the top of the potato. Crack it open and add herbs, spices or oil or butter. Mash together with a fork.



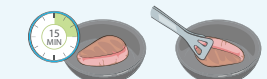
SESAME OIL



STEAK



Warm a cast iron pan over medium-high heat for a few minutes. Season the steak generously with salt. With the stove ventilation on, add the steak to the pan and sear for 1-2 minutes per side. Using tongs, sear the edges for another minute. Turn off heat and rest the steak in the pan 1 minute per side.



BOK CHOY



Cut bok choy into wedges and rinse well under cold water. In a large hot pan or wok, sauté with oil until just wilted but still perky. Remove from heat and toss with a few drops of soy sauce or some rice vinegar. Garnish with herbs.



BROWN RICE



Boil 1 part rice in 5 parts of salted water, partially covered, until tender, about 30 minutes. Drain excess liquid. Add herbs and butter or oil (if using).



AVOCADO OIL



SHRIMP



Peel and devein the raw shrimp. Toss in a bowl with salt and preferred spices (if using). Sear or grill the shrimp over medium-high heat for about 2 minutes or until opaque around the edges. Turn shrimp for a final 30 seconds and remove from heat.



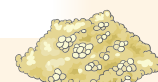
SPINACH



Toast sliced garlic in a large pan with oil. Once the garlic starts to brown around the edges, add the spinach and press down gently until it starts to wilt. Season with salt. Remove from pan once wilted, keep it warm in paper towel if desired.



QUINOA



Rinse quinoa well under cold water. In a sauce pot, add 1 part quinoa, preferred spices and 2 parts water. Bring to boil and season with salt. Cook for 5 minutes over high heat. Cover and reduce heat to medium. Cook for 10 minutes, or until liquid is evaporated and quinoa has doubled in size. Fluff with a fork.



CANOLA OIL



RED LENTILS



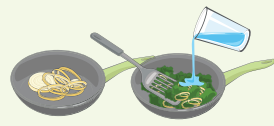
Rinse and quickly sort through lentils. In a sauce pot over medium - high heat, sauté onions, garlic and preferred spices until soft and caramelizing. Add 3 parts water and salt to taste. Cook until lentils are tender, about 40 minutes (longer for a thicker result).



KALE



Sauté sliced onion in oil. Once the onions start to caramelize, add the kale. Season with salt, add 1/4 cup water and cover. Stir every few minutes or so. Remove lid and cook until all the liquid has evaporated.



CHICKPEAS



Soak the chickpeas in 3 parts water overnight. Drain, add another 3 parts fresh water and simmer on medium heat until tender, about 2 hours. Add herbs, spices and salt halfway through cooking. Store the chickpeas in their cooking liquid for up to 4 days.



EXTRA VIRGIN COCONUT OIL



PRESSED YOGURT



Scoop Greek yogurt into a sieve, set over a bowl, and let strain in the fridge overnight. Discard the water, then transfer the pressed yogurt to the bowl. Stir in preferred herbs, spices and citrus and season with salt to taste. Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to a week.



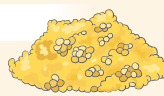
EGGPLANT



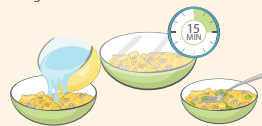
Grill whole eggplants over high heat, turning often, until skin is completely charred. Cool and peel away the charred skin. Tear eggplant up with a fork and toss with salt, citrus juice and any preferred spices.



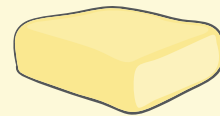
BULGUR



Toss 1 part bulgur in a bowl and season with salt. Bring 2 parts water to a boil and pour evenly over bulgur. Cover quickly with plastic wrap and let sit for 15 minutes. Fluff with a fork and add and garnishes or herbs.



BUTTER



SCALLOPS



Set a pan to medium-high heat. Season scallops with salt, spices, and oil or butter. Sear scallops for about a minute and a half per side, making sure to not crowd the pan. Remove from heat and garnish with citrus.



CARROTS



Peel and wash carrots but leave them whole. Toss them in a bowl with preferred spices and oil, and roast in the oven at 400° F degrees until soft and deeply coloured, about 35 minutes. Garnish with herbs.



PLANTAIN



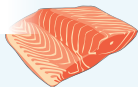
Peel the plantains and cut them into large pieces. Toss them in a bowl with preferred spices and oil, and roast in the oven at 400° F until soft and deeply colored, about 35 minutes. Garnish with herbs.



RAW AVOCADO



SALMON



Warm a pan over medium-high heat. Season salmon with salt, oil or butter, and spices. Place it in the pan skin side down and leave it be. Add herbs and citrus to pan (if using). Reduce heat to medium, cover, and cook for 6-8 minutes. Flip the fish once for the last minute. Rest it in the pan (heat off) for a few minutes.



BRUSSELS SPROUTS



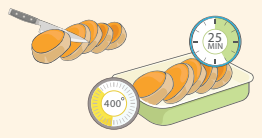
Remove the stem and cut the sprouts in half. Rinse and drain. Place in a single layer in a large pan over medium-high heat; season with salt and a few drops of oil. Stir after about 5 minutes, once they start to char. Cook for another few minutes. Garnish with herbs, chile flakes and/or a squeeze of citrus.



BUTTERNUT SQUASH



Cut the squash into 1" discs. Toss them in a bowl with red onion wedges, salt, preferred spices and choice of healthy fat. Roast at 400° F until soft and blistered, about 25 minutes.



CHOPPED ALMONDS



PORK TENDERLOIN



Set a pan or grill to medium-high heat. Season pork with salt, oil or butter, and spices. Place it in the pan and leave it be. Cook for a few minutes on each side, turning often. Add herbs and citrus to pan (if using), cover, and cook for a few more minutes. Rest it in the pan (heat off) for a few minutes.



BELL PEPPERS



Wash the peppers, cut them in half and rip out the core and stem. Cut or rip them into large pieces. Toss them in a bowl with preferred spices and oil, and roast in the oven at 450° F until soft and blistered, about 15 minutes.



SPELT



Rinse 1 part spelt under cold water. Add to a sauce pot with 1 part crushed tomatoes and 2 parts water. Bring to a boil; add salt and herbs to taste. Cook until tender, stirring often, about 40 minutes. Garnish with herbs.



CHOPPED PEANUTS



*If you're cooking without oil or butter, then use a nonstick pan or a grill.

STEP 2

PORTION YOUR INGREDIENTS.

Use the guide below to portion your meal.
(Remember, you can make more than one portion for leftovers the next day.)

PER SERVING:



PROTEIN

Women: 1 palm
Men: 2 palms



VEGETABLES

Women: 1 fist
Men: 2 fists



CARB

Women: 1 cupped hand
Men: 2 cupped hands



FAT

Women: 1 thumb
Men: 2 thumbs

Adjust portions up or down according to:

- How frequently you eat
- Your size/caloric needs
 - How active you are
 - Your results
- Appetite and satiety

STEP 3

CHOOSE AROMATICS AND GARNISHES.

Select a regional flavor profile below, then choose three or more ingredients from its list and put them on the counter so they're ready.

ITALIAN

- Oregano
- Basil
- Fennel



- Capers
- Anchovies
- Olives
- Orange

FRENCH

- Tarragon
- Thyme
- Rosemary



- Bay leaf
- Black pepper
- Lemon

MEXICAN

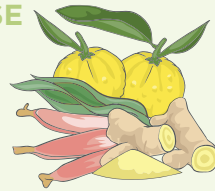
- Cilantro
- Cumin
- Cocoa



- Ancho and chipotle chiles
- Lime

JAPANESE

- Miso
- Sesame seeds
- Seaweed



- Pickled radish
- Ginger
- Yuzu

THAI

- Cilantro
- Mint
- Thai basil
- Ginger



- Lime
- Chiles
- Green onion
- Lemongrass

MOROCCAN

- Cardamom
- Saffron
- Cinnamon
- Anise



- Cayenne
- Cumin
- Preserved lemon

INDIAN

- Cumin
- Fenugreek
- Coriander
- Turmeric



- Curry powder
- Ginger
- Fresh curry leaf

CARIBBEAN

- Cinnamon
- Allspice
- Nutmeg
- Cloves



- Lime
- Scotch bonnets
- Pickled mango

SOUTHWEST

- Cumin
- Coriander
- Cilantro



- Mint
- Chiles
- Pepper
- Lime

SPANISH

- Smoked paprika
- Parsley
- Bay leaf
- Saffron



- Guindilla peppers
- Olives
- Orange

STEP 4

COOK THE FOOD.

Use preparation methods outlined in Step 1 and incorporate the aromatics and garnishes as follows.



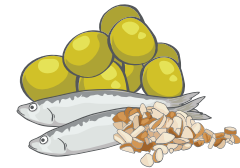
Add fresh herbs to your vegetable, or garnish the whole dish at the end.



Add dried spices to your smart carb.



Squeeze fresh citrus juice over your protein.

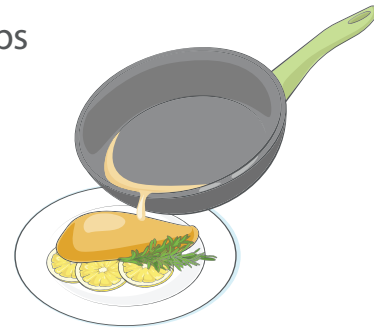


Sprinkle preserved foods and/or chopped nuts over your plate at the end.

Additional flavor tips



Sauté onions in your pan alongside green vegetables. They add depth of sweetness and texture.



When cooking chicken, pork, or salmon, use any pan drippings as a flavorful sauce.



Add garlic cloves (husk on) to your pan while your protein is cooking, or to your roasting pan with vegetables. This makes a flavorful garnish.

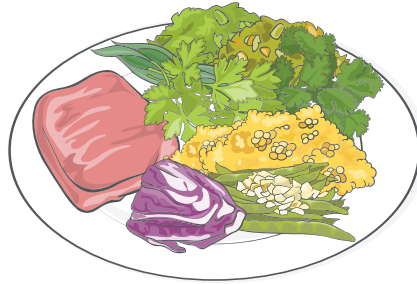


Sprinkle dried chile flakes or grate fresh horseradish on your protein. This offers an unexpected kick, building flavor with minimal effort.

STEP 5

PUT IT ALL ON YOUR PLATE.

Garnish with an additional sprinkle of chopped fresh herbs if desired.

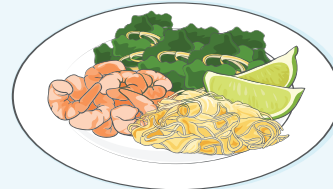


SAMPLE MEALS

Mix and match these ingredients however you choose.
Here are a few combos to get your imagination going.

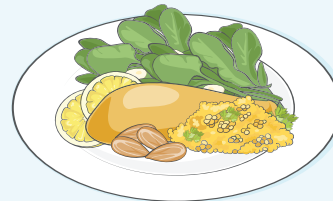
THAI THREE WAYS

- Steak with coconut brown rice and bok choy
- Chicken with eggplant, spelt, and peanuts
- Shrimp with kale and spaghetti squash



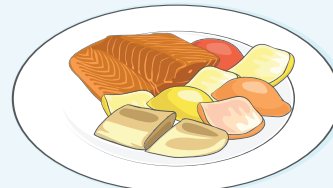
INDIAN THREE WAYS

- Chicken with spinach, bulgur, and almonds
- Curried chickpeas with eggplant and yogurt
- Red lentils with Brussels sprouts and sweet potatoes



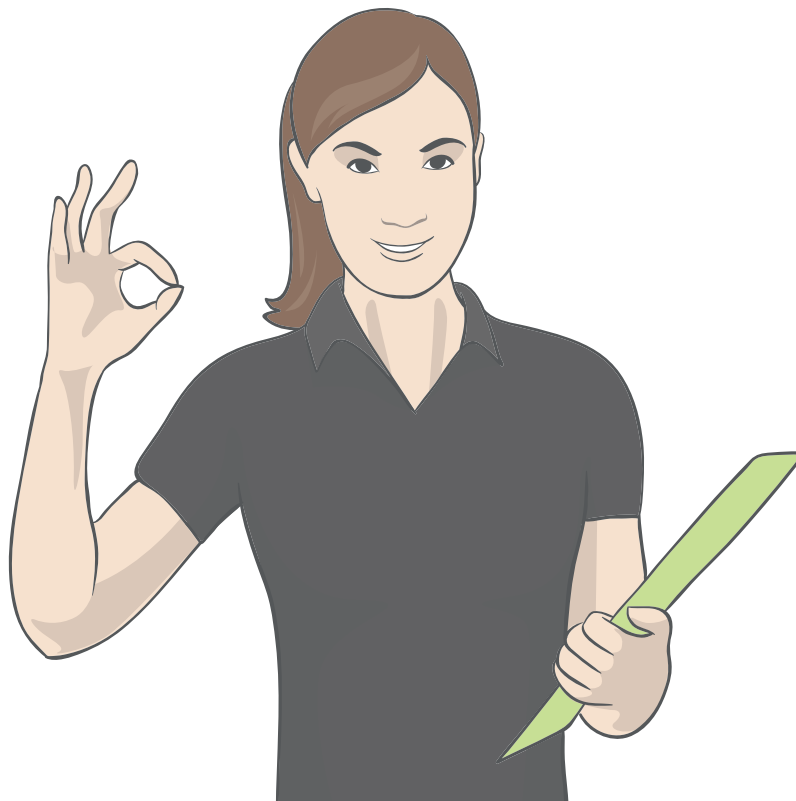
MEXICAN THREE WAYS

- Chicken with spinach and quinoa
- Salmon with bell peppers and plantain
- Beans with carrots, brown rice, and avocado



MAKE AN AMAZING MEAL TONIGHT

- IT'S EASY TO DO.
- THE TEMPLATE IS FLEXIBLE.
- IT'S BASED ON FLAVOR SCIENCE.
 - THE MEALS TASTE GREAT.
 - THEY'RE GOOD FOR YOU TOO.



Want help becoming the healthiest, fittest, strongest version of you?

Most people know that regular movement, eating well, sleep, and stress management are important for looking and feeling better.

Yet they need help applying that knowledge in the context of their busy, sometimes stressful lives.

That's why we work closely with [Precision Nutrition Coaching](#) clients to help them lose fat, get stronger, and improve their health... no matter what challenges they're dealing with.

It's also why we work with health and fitness professionals (through our [Level 1](#) and [Level 2](#) Certification programs) to teach them how to coach their own clients through the same challenges.

For more information on Precision Nutrition Coaching:
<http://get.pn/coaching>